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REPORT OF THE SECOND INTER-AMERICAN SEMINAR
ON CIVIL REGISTRATION

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INTRODUCTION

1. To further the development and improvement of civil registration services in Latin America, the First Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration was held in Santiago, Chile, from 29 November to 11 December 1954. That Seminar drew attention to the heterogeneity of registration methods, the lack of clear and uniform definitions, and the defective administrative arrangements for national civil registration services, all of which were factors in the failure of members of the public to register vital events either within the statutory time period, or at all, and to give the registrar accurate information. 1/
2. Since that first Seminar, the status of vital statistics in Latin America has been surveyed several times and each time the conclusion has been that vital records and statistics in this region are generally deficient. One or two countries have improved their services to some degree, but much still remains to be done.
3. Discussions at the United Nations Seminar on Evaluation and Utilization of Population Census Results in Latin America, held 30 November to 18 December 1959 in Santiago, emphasized again the need to evaluate not only the completeness and accuracy of census data but also the reliability of vital statistics, "so as to obtain a broad view of the adequacy of the two main sources of demographic information and to achieve the best possible estimate of the components of population growth". This evaluation was recognized as one of the first requisites for a sound national programme of demographic study, and the need for this cannot be over-emphasized, in view of the region's high population growth rate and the need for balanced economic and social development.
4. The Vital Statistics Sub-Committee of the Inter-American Statistical Institute's Committee on Improvement of National Statistics (COINS), meeting in Washington 27 February to 10 March 1961, noted in its draft report that there were very considerable differences existing among the American nations with respect to their ability to produce and use the theoretically wide range of vital statistics desirable, differences due in part to variations in the quality of civil registration.

1/ See Final Report of the First Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration (United Nations Publication, Sales No: 1955.XVIII.7, Statistical Papers Series M, No 23).

5. The Second Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration was organized in response to the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Committee for the Improvement of Civil Registration in the Americas (convened in Montevideo from 12 to 16 June 1961 by the Inter-American Children Institute); in accordance with resolutions 18 (IX) and 8 (XII) of the United Nations Statistical Commission (recommending that developing countries be advised and assisted in improving their demographic statistics in every possible way, including, inter alia, regional seminars on registration practices for the direct exchange of national experience), and in accordance with resolutions 154 (VII) and 169 (IX) of the Economic Commission for Latin America.

6. The Seminar was organized by the United Nations, through its Statistical Office, the Bureau of Technical Assistance Operations, the Economic Commission for Latin America, and the Latin American Demographic Centre, in co-operation with the Government of Peru, the Inter-American Statistical Institute, the Inter-American Children Institute, the Pan American Health Organization and the Inter-American Civil Registration Association. Its main aims were to examine the level of development of the civil registration services, determine the principles for the organization and operation of a model civil registration service, and lay the bases for a regional programme to improve these services during the period 1965-69.

Part I

MEMBERSHIP, ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Opening and closing meetings

7. The Second Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration was held from 30 November to 11 December in the Lima Municipal Building.

At the opening meeting the chair was taken by Mr. Carlos Pestana, Chief of the National Planning Institute of Lima, who opened the Seminar on behalf of the host Government. Mr. Gustaaf Loeb, Chief of the Statistical Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), and Mr. Rafael Sajón, Director General of the Inter-American Children Institute, spoke on behalf of the participating organizations.

8. The closing meeting was held on 11 December. Speeches were made on behalf of the host Government by Mr. Luis Bedoya Reyes, Mayor of Lima, and Mr. Numa León de Vivero, National Director of Statistics and Censuses of Peru and Chairman of the Seminar; on behalf of the Inter-American Children Institute by Mr. Adolfo Morales, and on behalf of the participants by Mr. Herbert Squires of St. Vincent and Mr. Luis Vidales of Colombia. Mr. Otto Sosa Agramonte, of the Dominican Republic, announced that his Government had offered to act as the host for the next Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration.

Membership and attendance 2/

9. The seminar was attended, in a personal capacity, by sixty-five participants, from Argentina, Bolivia, Barbados, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela.

10. The following international agencies and institutions were represented at the meetings: the Latin American Demographic Centre, the Inter-American Statistical Institute, the Inter-American Children Institute, and the Pan American Health Organization. A representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) also attended as an observer.

2/ See Annex I, List of Participants.

Election of officers

11. At the opening meeting the following officers were elected:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Numa León de Vivero, National Director of Statistics and Censuses of Peru.
<u>First Vice-Chairman:</u>	Rubens Porto, Director of the Department of Statistics, Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs of Brazil.
<u>Second Vice-Chairman:</u>	Errol Donald Braithwaite, Deputy Registrar General of Trinidad and Tobago.
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Ulises Fonseca Talavera, Civil Registrar of the Capital District of Managua, Nicaragua.

Agenda

12. The Seminar's discussions were organized according to on the following agenda: 3/

- (1) The functions of a civil registration service and the economic and social implications.
- (2) Level of development of the civil registration services in the Americas.
- (3) Applications of the resolutions of the First Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration.
- (4) Basic principles for a model civil registration service.
 - (a) Legal principles.
 - (b) Organizational patterns.
 - (c) Operation.
- (5) Regional programme for the improvement of civil registration services during the period 1965-69.

3/ The discussions were based on the working documents listed in Annex II.

Part II

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Functions of a civil registration service and the economic and social implications ^{4/}

13. The Seminar recognized that the civil registration service is an institution with a social purpose which carries out an essential service for the community. It should be a government service and its basic functions should be of a juridical and statistical nature.
14. The juridical function is to register the events and juridical acts that are the basis of the civil status. This makes possible the organization and proper functioning of the juridical system governing the relations of the individuals organized in families and their relations with the State. This system rests on a number of juridical events: birth, which gives rise to the personality, the civil status, and to other rights and duties, death which extinguishes the personality in question, and gives rise to rights of inheritance and other rights and duties; and all the other vital events (marriage, divorce, separation, annulment, adoption, legitimation and recognition) which create, modify or extinguish a civil status, and various rights and duties.
15. The evidence of vital events is important to the State, as well as to the individual. The law has established a system of formal proof of civil status events and acts, which represents a recognition that civil registration contributes to the stability of the relations among individuals, and between individuals and the State. This stability is the very foundation of law and order, and a necessary condition for development. Thus the registration of vital events can be regarded as an indicator of how far individuals or groups form part of the system of law and order, and consequently how far the citizen is a part of the social and cultural life of the community.
16. As regards the statistical function, it was considered that the wide use of the data on the vital events collected by the civil registration service is the principal means of improving the existing knowledge of the demographic variables, a knowledge which is an essential basis for development planning, especially in such sectors as public health, housing and education.

^{4/} The discussion of this item was based on the following working documents: Uses of vital records (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.5); Un enfoque actual de los sistemas de registro y estadísticas vitales desde el punto de vista de la salud (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.13); Civil registration and social development (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.15); and Socio-economic considerations about the office of vital statistics (civil registration office) (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.22).

17. If this view is taken, it is important to define what attitude the civil registration service should take as a State agency. The Seminar recognized that the service is an active component of the group of services that co-operate to permit the State to attain its proper ends, directed to the welfare of the people and to meeting the needs and expectations of each community. The civil registration service forms part of a group of institutions, all of which should co-operate at the national level with definite goals in mind, for the purpose of improving the level of living of the population, within the framework of national planning.

18. At the present moment the scientific study of the social situation, and in particular of change, is one of the most urgent and important tasks, yet it is also one of the least explored areas because of the lack of data. To fill this gap as far as vital statistics are concerned, a radical change in civil registration is called for, involving a much more positive and flexible approach.

19. The Seminar considered that the civil registration service cannot fulfil its functions properly without the assistance of the community. Consequently techniques must be used, and instruments devised, to make the community participate actively. Civil registration is essentially an activity that requires the participation of the public in the tasks and responsibilities of the government service. Instead of relying on methods of compulsion, civil registration must represent a "felt need" for the whole community, before it can rely on the co-operation of every citizen and overcome the natural indifference and resistance that is the response to any request to supply information.

20. The participants considered that, in accordance with the above-described principles, it was necessary to study the cultural level of the population and how far it had become aware of its civic duties, including the rules and practices of civil registration, and what difficulties the public had to overcome in order to comply with their obligations in that respect, with a view to seeking appropriate educational measures to bring about an improvement in the attitude of the community to civil registration. This task should form part of the whole programme to promote and give institutional form to public participation in the process of development.

Level of development of the civil registration
services in the Americas 5/

21. With respect to institutional organization, the participants stated that the institutions that make up the public administration of a country should function as an organic whole in close co-operation, since this is the only way to assist the State to accomplish its aims and to meet the

5/ The discussion on this subject was based on the following working papers: Description of some civil registration services in the Americas (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.9); Algunos intentos de evaluación del grado de integridad de las estadísticas vitales en países latinoamericanos (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.16); and International activities in promoting development of improvement in civil registration: 1954-64 (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.21).

expectations of the community. Consequently the civil registration service, which forms part of this group of institutions, cannot hope to carry out its task regardless of the interests of the other bodies.

22. The Seminar recognized that although there are no conceptual obstacles to the carrying out of the civil registration functions described above, there are others that interfere with its smooth working. There must be a proper knowledge and understanding of the aims of civil registration, since, on the one hand, it is given functions which are not strictly within its competence, and on the other, there is insufficient awareness of the future social implications of the juridical acts and events, that are entered in the civil register.

23. Generally speaking, the legislation governing the functioning of the civil registration services is out of date, not only because it was enacted some time ago, but mainly because it does not permit the proper fulfilment of the functions described. In most cases the civil registration laws are defective, and must be brought up to date and co-ordinated so that the service can fulfil its functions in accordance with the needs of the country concerned. The Seminar considered that the existence of the minimum of legal texts would greatly assist in simplifying the legislation, to the extent that the political and administrative organization of each State would permit.

24. Another defect that hampers the efficient operation of the civil registration service is the unsuitable boundaries of the registration zones, which in most cases are established on the basis of the country's political and administrative divisions, regardless of other factors. If the territorial division is to serve the specific aim of facilitating the registration of vital events, such factors as geography, population, topography, means of communication and transport, climate and the resources of the registration office, should all be taken into account so that each registrar can exercise effective control over this community.

25. Any expansion or restriction of the boundaries of the registration zone should not require formal legislation but, in order to make the system more flexible, should be within the competence of the highest administrative authority under which the civil registration service operates, and as far as possible at the proposal of the authorities that administer the service.

26. With respect to the generally unsatisfactory methods used in the selection, appointment, training and remuneration of registration staff, the Seminar considered that civil registration officials had not yet attained the status that is essential to the proper fulfilment of their functions. If this status is to be attained, the minimum requirements are proper training of the staff at all levels, security of tenure, possibility of advancement (in other words a career), and proper remuneration. The Seminar considered that the aim should be to establish the profession of registrar in those Latin American countries where it did not already exist, at least for those who act as the chief of a civil registration office. To that end, the international agencies and the

/Inter-American Civil

Inter-American Civil Registration Association might suggest the basis for the curriculum of studies that must be completed before a person could qualify as a certified registrar, and provide at the appropriate time and at suitable intervals the course or courses concerned, in order to encourage among the countries of the Americas the progressive appointment of trained registrars.

27. As regards procedures and documentation, the Seminar considered that the basic problem is the excessive complexity of the procedures and the inadequate content of the documents. It was considered that in this field it was particularly important to apply modern principles of scientific administration, which permit effective simplification of procedures and determination of the exact content of the documents, by means of an appropriate definition of aims.

28. With respect to the coverage of civil registration, it was pointed out that even though the degree of under-registration attributed to some countries appears exaggerated, in most of the countries of the region the extent to which vital events are omitted from the register limits its use as a source for calculating national birth rates and death rates. Inaccuracies in the data compiled also limit their usefulness as a means of learning the facts of the country's social, demographic and health situation. Among the many causes of this situation the lack of training of registration officials looms large.

29. As with few exceptions civil budgets are inadequate, it was suggested that the civil registration services should make additional efforts to get a larger budget, giving an explanation of the expenditure proposed, and obtaining the co-operation and support of the bodies in the field of statistics, health, planning, etc., that make use of the civil registration service.

30. With respect to environmental and cultural problems, the Seminar indicated the need to carry out studies to determine how and to what extent population dispersal and a low level of education are an obstacle to the complete, accurate and prompt registration of vital events. In this connexion it was considered that a realization of the cultural and social significance of the register of vital events, on the part of the community (a realization that should be given to children at an early age in all schools), would help to remove these environmental and cultural obstacles. The establishment of areas of experiment and research would also help considerably in achieving the desired aims.

31. It was recognized that the United Nations (principally through its Statistical Office, and through some of its specialized agencies), the Pan American Health Organization, the Inter-American Statistical Institute and the Inter-American Children Institute, have all encouraged activities aimed at the improvement of civil registers, but none of them has the exclusive responsibility for work in this field.

/32. The

32. The Seminar considered that the best way to remedy this situation was to strengthen the co-ordination between the above-mentioned international bodies, and between those bodies and the national organizations. Accordingly it was suggested that a committee should be set up, consisting of representatives of the United Nations Statistical Office, the Pan American Health Organization, the Inter-American Statistical Institute and the Inter-American Children Institute, such bodies which could promote an integrated programme for improving the registration of vital events.

Application of the resolutions of the First Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration 6/

33. At the First Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration, a number of resolutions were adopted that aimed at improving the operation of the civil registration services and overcoming the defects and obstacles referred to in the preceding paragraphs. When the Second Seminar came to re-examine these resolutions, there was general agreement that the resolutions set forth in the report of the First Seminar are still fully applicable, and consequently it was reaffirmed that countries should do everything possible to carry out those resolutions.

34. Nevertheless, there were some comments on the resolutions. Resolution 4.11, for example, relating to the possibility of requiring that the footprints of the new-born child and the fingerprints of the mother should be taken when births are registered, did not appear easy to apply. Similarly, it was suggested that related resolutions should be consolidated, so that without altering the substance of the resolutions, their total number could be reduced. Lastly, some participants considered that the wording of the Spanish text of resolution 1.5 was ambiguous, and should be interpreted in the light of the English version.

35. Although the resolutions of the First Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration are regarded as valid, the participants said that their application had not received the attention it deserved. During the last ten years no real progress had been made regarding structure and organization, and generally speaking Governments had not given the civil registration services sufficient support, which was reflected in inadequate budgets and staff who were badly paid and of low quality. The registrars, for their part, continued to do their work in a passive and routine manner, which did not promote completeness of the registration of vital events, or improvement of the accuracy of the statistical data collected. Lastly, there was insufficient co-operation, between the civil registration service and other related institutions, even those with which the service should co-operate on a permanent basis, such as the health and statistical services.

6/ The discussion of this item was based on the working document: Application of the resolutions of the First Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.20), and on the reference document: Final Report of the First Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration, op.cit.

36. One of the main reasons for the failure to adopt or carry out the resolutions of the first seminar is the lack of a clear government policy on civil registration. In that connexion it was considered essential that the agencies responsible for the planning of government activities should give due regard to the importance of both the juridical and statistical functions of civil legislation, so that those agencies should, so far as lay in their power, promote the improvement of the organization and operation of the service, and provide the funds necessary for that purpose. It was considered that in countries with a federal system of government, the application of the resolutions of the First Seminar would be facilitated by measures to improve co-ordination between the different levels of government.

37. Other factors contributing to the non-application of the resolutions have been the failure of national authorities to understand the importance of civil registration functions, especially its non-juridical functions; the unsatisfactory nature of the existing legislation, or the absence of the necessary legal provisions; the failure to publicize the resolutions within the country among the agencies concerned, and above all in circles where decisions on the subject could be taken; and the lack of any international agency that can work with the countries in applying the resolutions, with the aid of resources similar to those that have proved so effective in the field of vital statistics (technical assistance, training of staff, etc.).

38. The Seminar considered that the national committees on vital statistics, whose establishment was recommended by the World Health Organization (in 1950), and endorsed by such other international meetings as the First Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration (1954), the Third Inter-American Statistical Conference (1955) and the Vital Statistics Sub-Committee of the Inter-American Statistical Institute's Committee on Improvement of National Statistics (COINS), could play an important part, in suitable operating conditions.

39. Although the national committees, with few exceptions, have not played an active and useful part in the past ten years, in a few cases the provincial, State, or even local committees have been able to perform useful co-ordinating functions with fruitful results; this shows, firstly, the need to experiment more with the different methods of organization and operation that these committees could use, and secondly, that given the right conditions these committees can be very useful bodies.

/Basic principles

Basic principles for a model civil registration service(a) Legal principles 7/

40. In its discussion of the legal bases for the civil registration service, the Seminar took note of the compilation of civil registration laws prepared by the Inter-American Children Institute. As a result of its study of the related documents and the outline for the model law prepared by the Inter-American Civil Registration Association, the Seminar agreed that the following bases might usefully be followed in drafting the legislation.

I. General considerations

1. Name of the institution or service that registers the events and acts relating to the civil status, and any amendments thereto. Authority under which the service comes. Organic structure.
2. Functions to be performed.
3. The registrar and his functions.
4. Whether or not registrations and other civil registration transactions are free of charge.
5. Competence and territorial jurisdiction of registrars.
6. Rules governing the establishment of civil registration offices and registration zones (sub-offices).
7. Rules to promote an active role for the registrar and to govern his relations with the public.
8. Compulsory nature of registration.

II. Registration books and documents

1. Rules on the registration document (book, document, or book combined with a document).
2. Number, method and form of the books or documents.
3. Procedure to be followed in the case of destruction or loss of books or documents.
4. Public nature of the register: right to inspect it and to ask for copies.

7/ The discussion on this item was based on the following documents: Fundamental principles for the organization of a civil registration service (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.2); General outlines of the organization of a civil registration service in Latin America (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.8).

/III. Registrations

III. Registrations in general

1. Form in which registrations are entered: consecutive; no abbreviations; corrections, etc.
2. Standardized content of the registrations.
3. Essential items that must be included in a registration before it can be legally valid.
4. Application to register a vital event or civil status act: verbally or in writing.
5. Registration of vital events or civil status acts that take place abroad.
6. Rules on delayed registrations.
7. Rules on the correlation of the registrations for a given individual.
8. Rules on the value of registrations as evidence.

IV. Duplicate certificates or copies of registrations

1. Rules on the content of duplicate certificates or copies, and on short forms of certificates.
2. Rules on the form of the certificates: whether handwritten, typed, photographed, or otherwise mechanically produced.

V. Births

1. Persons who should report a birth.
2. Persons responsible for registering a birth.
3. Evidence required for the registration of a birth.
4. Period allowed for the registration of a birth.
5. Items that should be included in the registration of a birth.
6. Place where the birth should be registered.

VI. Legitimations and recognitions

1. Time at which a child may be legitimized or recognized.
2. What is required of a mother or father who legitimize or recognizes a child.

/3. Authorities

3. Authorities through whom a child may be legitimized or recognized.
4. Formalities required for registering a legitimation or recognition; documents in which a legitimation or recognition should be noted.

VII. Adoptions

1. Persons entitled to request the registration of an adoption.
2. Time at which the registration may be made.
3. Official empowered to register an adoption.
4. Requirements for the registration of an adoption; documents that must be produced.
5. Further registrations or annotations to which the registration of an adoption gives rise.

VIII. Marriages

1. Rules on the power to perform marriages, and place of registration.
2. Conditions to be fulfilled by the contracting parties.
3. Content of a marriage registration.
4. Formalities for a deathbed marriage.
5. Special formalities for marriages of widowed or divorced persons, or of persons whose marriages have been annulled.
6. Marriages by proxy.

IX. Divorce, and other acts that change the civil status

1. Requirements for the registration of a divorce.
2. Requirements for the registration of the annulment of a marriage.
3. Requirements for the registration of a legal separation.
4. Further registrations or annotations to which these acts give rise.

/X. Deaths

X. Deaths

1. Persons who should report a death.
2. Authority responsible for registering a death.
3. Evidence required for the registration of a death.
4. Period allowed for the registration of a death.
5. Place where the death should be registered.
6. Items that should be included in the registration of a death.
7. Requirements for the disposal of a corpse.
8. Rules governing the registration of presumed deaths.

XI. Foetal deaths

1. Concept of a foetal death.
2. Evidence required for the registration of a foetal death.
3. Period allowed for the registration of a foetal death.
4. Place where a foetal death should be registered.
5. Items to be included on the registration document if registration is considered necessary.
6. Requirements for disposal of a foetus.

XII. Family names and personal names

1. Number of names that can be given to any person.
2. Order of the family names.
3. Personal and family names of foundlings.
4. Power to change family and personal names.
5. Restrictions, if any, on the right to use certain words as names.

XIII. Correction, cancellation or reconstruction of registrations

1. Authority to correct, cancel or reconstruct registrations.
2. Persons entitled to request a correction, cancellation or reconstruction.

/3. Corrections

3. Corrections, cancellations and reconstructions on the initiative of the competent authority.
4. Grounds for correcting, cancelling or reconstructing registrations; procedures.

XIV. Collection and transmission of data for the preparation of vital statistics

1. Procedure for collecting statistical data and transmitting it to the service responsible for processing.

XV. Archives

1. Rules on the organization and operation of the local, regional and national archives.
2. Rules on preparing local, regional and national indexes.

(b) Organizational patterns 8/

41. The dynamic development process which is taking place in the Latin American countries requires that the State must reorganize and co-ordinate the activities of all its institutions, establish their aims, make it clear what their functions should be, provide the means to carry out those functions. The advances made in administrative techniques make it necessary that each government institution should organize and carry out its activities in accordance with modern planning principles, so as to make the best use of the resources available and obtain more fruitful results in its own field of operation.

42. As regards civil registration, the first step is to redefine its aims in line with the functions it must perform, described in earlier paragraphs. This redefinition of aims should cover the activities that the civil registration service must carry out in close co-operation with other State institutions.

8/ The discussion of this item was based on the following documents: Fundamental principles for the organization of a civil registration service (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.2); Sample vital registration experiment (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.4); Origin of and basis for the inter-institutional relations of public services (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.7); Descripción del funcionamiento de la zona de mejoramiento de registro en Venezuela (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.18); El departamento jurídico del servicio de registro civil de Chile (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.19).

43. Once the aims of civil registration have been determined, in line with the country's general economic and social development targets, the service will have to be reorganized so that it can effectively carry out its functions. The Seminar recognized that for this purpose it was urgent that the civil registration service should adopt the planning techniques referred to, and form part of the national development programme. The planning of civil registration activities cannot be an independent process, since other related sectors must also be involved in the same activities. Consequently machinery for the co-ordination of the service with these sectors is essential.

44. Within the framework of an administrative modernization, an evaluation of the problems that beset the civil registration services, especially in relation to completeness, can provide basic criteria to guide the process of administrative revision. Such an appraisal should be carried out in conjunction by those services and by all the bodies that have an interest in receiving civil registration data. Among the means that could be used for such an appraisal, the Seminar considered as important procedures combining population censuses and samplings with specific surveys to measure the completeness of the registers, together with special studies to supplement the usefulness of the registers. Similarly, the Seminar thought it would be advisable to conduct tests to measure the accuracy or truth of the information furnished by the civil register, and, from a more general standpoint, to organize and develop registration zones, with the aim of achieving a gradual improvement in the service. The fact that such measures reflect the recommendations by the First Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration is the reason why they were endorsed by the Second Seminar.

45. With respect to the technical and administrative features that the body responsible for civil registration should have, the Seminar agreed that no standard rules could be recommended, since the different political and administrative systems of the various countries would have to be taken into account. However, it was considered that there were certain criteria that could be generally applied, and the Seminar considered that the most important of these were:

(a) The civil registration service should operate at the highest administrative level, in accordance with the situation and political and institutional organization of each country, in order to ensure a proper technical operation that excludes activities and influences outside its true sphere of action.

(b) There should be a centralized organization if possible, and if not, at least a supervisory body to lay down standard rules and co-ordinate the work.

(c) The national or regional services should be organized with an appropriate hierarchy, and with separate sections dealing with juridical, administrative, budgetary and inter-institutional questions, among others.

/(d) The

(d) The staff should be assured of an administrative career, in the hope that senior officials and those acting as chiefs of offices would be professionals, or at least, if that is not possible, persons fit to undertake the responsibilities of the post.

(e) A central and local archives should be organized, in the light of the relevant recommendations of the First Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration.

(f) The offices should be easy of access, their territorial jurisdiction should be clearly defined, and the office hours should be suited to the needs of the population, at local offices, and should provide for service on holidays.

(g) Wherever possible mechanized procedures should be adopted for doing the work.

(c) Operation 9/

46. With respect to measures to ensure the proper functioning of the civil registration services, the Seminar's discussions centred on those that would ensure the completeness, accuracy and promptness of the registration of vital events, as well as co-operation between the registrars and those responsible for preparing the vital statistics.

47. As previously stated, the Seminar recognized the need to make regular appraisals, on the basis of the information available, with a view to establishing the degree and cause of omissions from the register for the various regions within the country. For this purpose it was considered that the methods set forth in the working documents would be useful. Such studies should be carried out in co-operation with the other institutions that participate in the preparation of vital statistics.

9/ The discussion of this item was based on the following documents: Report on an experimental survey conducted to measure omissions in the records of births and deaths in the Republic of Panama (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.1); Some indications of the incompleteness of the registration of infant births and deaths in the Republic of Argentina (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.3); Continuing control measures to ensure the completeness of registration (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.6); Methods of evaluating completeness of civil registration (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.10); El concepto de administración como factor de progreso de los servicios de registro civil (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.11); Analytical methods of evaluating completeness and quality of vital statistics (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.12); Programa de capacitación y entrenamiento para funcionarios de registro civil (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.17).

/48. Without

48. Without prejudice to the study by international agencies of methods suited to Latin America that would permit taking advantage of such demographic surveys as the 1970 censuses in order to evaluate the completeness of the registration of vital events, the following methods were suggested as suitable for measuring the accuracy of the registers in certain cases:

- (a) A comparison with various lists independent of civil registration (notices of births and deaths; lists of baptisms; lists of burial certificates; school registrations, etc.).
- (b) A study of the consistency for comparable periods of the total number of births and deaths.
- (c) A study of the ratio of total births to total deaths.
- (d) A study of the consistency of the distribution by age and sex.
- (e) A study of the consistency or probability of the rates obtained on the basis of the events registered, and the economic, cultural, social, health and other conditions prevailing in the country and in regions within the country.
- (f) A study of the pattern of the total and infant death rates by sex and age.
- (g) Special surveys to measure the degree of omission and accuracy of the information collected through the registers.
- (h) Population censuses, during which the special infant card can be used.
- (i) Surveys not especially intended to measure the degree of omission and accuracy of the information, but which can throw light on those questions.
- (j) Estimates based on census results; compensatory equation and fertility rates by cohorts.
- (k) Theoretical population methods.
- (l) Calculation of the inverse survival rate of the child population obtained through censuses.

49. With respect to inter-institutional relations the Seminar recommended that working groups should be set up, composed of demographers, statisticians, registrars, public health officers, sociologists, etc., to carry out studies on specific aspects of vital events.

50. The following particular measures to improve the completeness, accuracy and promptness of registration were suggested:

- (a) Revision of the civil registration legislation and its regulations to adapt them to new conditions and requirements in the country concerned.
- (b) Steps to ensure strict fulfilment of the legal requirements (for example the reporting of a birth or death; the requirement of a civil registration certificate as proof of the occurrence of a vital event; the requirement of burial permits, etc.).
- (c) Staff training on a permanent basis.
- (d) The establishment of registry sub-offices in hospitals, clinics and maternity centres.
- (e) A permanent system for the inspection and advising of registry offices, and consideration of the possibility of holding seminars and other national conferences from time to time.
- (f) Establishment of sufficient statutory time-limit for the registration of vital events, and regular analysis of the extent to which the provisions in question are complied with. Since late reporting indicates a tendency towards non-reporting of the occurrence of vital events, the Seminar recommended the issuing of tables showing the degree of delay in registrations.
- (g) Incentives to register within the statutory period, such as the provision of free copies, and of the child's identity card; and making use, for the same purpose, of the application of certain social welfare measures, such as social security, family allowances, maternity grants, etc.
- (h) A continuous publicity campaign, particularly among the population in rural areas or in places where there is normally or periodically a high population density, to inform the population about civil registration rules, to encourage complete, accurate and prompt registration of vital events, and ensure that all social sectors are aware of the benefits that can be derived from civil registration, both by the State and by the people themselves.
- (i) Simplification of formalities, as far as the legislation in force permits.

/Regional programme

Regional programme for improving civil registration
during the period 1964-69 10/

51. The Seminar took the view that it was of basic importance for countries to work out a programme to improve civil registration services, of which the first stage would cover the period 1965-69. The initiative and main responsibility for the preparation of the programme would rest with the Governments themselves, and they should make use of the co-operation of the national committee on civil registration and vital statistics, with a view to ensuring both the participation of all the agencies that make up the system that produces statistics, and the full implementation of the programme.

52. The following were regarded as the bases for preparing a programme of this nature:

- (a) Formulating a government policy to ensure that the programme of improvement would be carried out.
- (b) Conducting the specific studies needed to determine the existing defects in the organization and functioning of the service.
- (c) Formulating the programme on the basis of those studies and the goals established for the period in question.
- (d) Periodic evaluation of the programme in order to introduce any changes needed for its gradual improvement.
- (e) Incorporating the programme to improve the civil registration services into the national programme of economic, social and administrative reform plans.
- (f) Far-reaching publicity for the programme in co-operation with the educational authorities and the social service organizations.

53. As a guide in drawing up a programme of national action for the next five years the Seminar recommended that an outline of the following nature should be used, since it assigns specific responsibilities to the central planning body that is assumed to exist in each country, and to the services that usually make up the system that produces vital statistics:

10/ The discussions on this item were based on the following documents: Bases for a programme to improve civil registration services in Latin America between 1965 and 1969 (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.14), and International activities in promoting development of improvement in civil registration: 1954-1964 (ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.21).

I. Planning Office

1. Ensuring that the national committee on civil registration and vital and health statistics includes senior officials of the bodies responsible for civil registration, statistics, health and planning, and keeping watch on the efficiency of its operation.
2. Providing technical assistance in the formulation of the programme to improve the civil registration service, to ensure that the programme is consistent with national plans, especially development plans.
3. Giving due priority to the allocation of funds to the civil registration service to enable it to carry out the programme.

II. Civil registration

1. Study of the existing situation, with an indication of the factors hampering its improvement and development.
2. Formulation of a programme to be carried out within five years, whose aims would include:
 - (a) Improving the structure of the service;
 - (b) Bringing the distribution and facilities of local registry offices into line with the population to be served;
 - (c) Training of registrars;
 - (d) Improving the completeness and reliability of the data by general publicity campaigns, campaigns in primary and secondary schools, and campaigns among certain professional groups (doctors, midwives, etc.), on the importance and operation of civil registration;
 - (e) Establishing periods within which specific levels of completeness would be attained.
3. A plan for joint action with other government bodies with a view to:
 - (a) Obtaining the funds essential to the carrying out of the programme.
 - (b) Securing the inclusion of requests for international technical assistance (fellowships, experts, etc.) in national programmes.

/III. Statistical

III. Statistical Office

1. Inclusion in the programmes of the Statistical Office of activities aimed at:
 - (a) Determining the degree of omission of registrations of vital events and the main defects in their accuracy. This study should be based on the smallest possible geographical unit, and should include field studies if they are considered necessary.
 - (b) Co-operating with the civil registration service in publicity campaigns both among the general public and among professional groups.
 - (c) Co-operating in programmes to train registrars.
 - (d) Co-operating in other activities of interest to the civil registration service.
2. Transmitting regular and up-to-date reports to local, provincial and national civil registration offices on the figures for births, deaths and marriages for each office.

IV. Department of Health

1. Inclusion in the work programme of activities aimed at:
 - (a) Convincing the medical profession of the importance of a prompt and detailed medical certificate covering births and deaths, including foetal deaths;
 - (b) Preparing publicity material for that purpose.
 - (c) Including a reference to (a) above in the curricula of schools of medicine and public health.
 - (d) Making a proper evaluation of the reliability of the medical and health data obtained from the civil registration office.

54. The Seminar discussed the need for the countries of the region to promote an exchange of information, especially in relation to the application of new programmes, and to facilitate an exchange of experts as advisers and observers.

55. With respect to aid from international agencies in the field of civil registration, either through the committee that the Seminar proposed should be set up, or directly from the agencies concerned, the Seminar stressed the benefit that countries could derive from prompt, full-scale and co-ordinated action. It was suggested that the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the Pan American Health Organization and the Inter-American Statistical Institute might examine their technical assistance programmes with particular attention to the institutions that participate in the production of vital statistics, especially the civil registration service and problems relating to public administration in general.

/56. In

56. In detail, the Seminar agreed that international technical assistance should include the following:

(a) Advice from experts on improving civil registration legislation and regulations; suggestions as to administrative procedures and the preparation of related rules, including rules on questions of mechanizing the service; organization of national training courses for registrars; carrying out of tests to evaluate the reliability of the statistical information collected by the civil registration service; and the introduction of publicity techniques to arouse the interest of the community in prompt registration of vital events.

(b) Granting of fellowships for officials in the civil registration, statistical and health services.

(c) The preparation of manuals for the use of registrars in the Latin American countries, describing the main administrative techniques applicable to civil registration, and certain simple statistical methods for measuring the completeness of the registers and the accuracy of the statistical information they provide.

(d) The conducting of experiments to improve the methodology of evaluating the registers and the resultant statistics, by means of sample surveys.

57. With respect to assistance for training of personnel, it was suggested that the proposed committee for co-ordinating the activities of international agencies in the field of civil registration could take advantage of the existence of the Advanced School of Public Administration for Central America (ESAPAC, Costa Rica), the Getulio Vargas Foundation School of Administration in Brazil, the School of Public Administration in Puerto Rico, and the School of Public Health of the University of Chile, by arranging through those institutions for courses on administrative techniques that could be applied to civil registration, and for provision of advice on reorganizing the civil registrations services.

58. In connexion with training the Seminar learned with great interest of the training programme that the National Center of Health Statistics of the United States planned to give shortly, and that would be useful for training registrars, as well as statistical and public health officials. The Seminar suggested that the competent agencies might consider the possibility of giving courses of this type in Spanish in the future, if possible in a country in the Latin America area.

59. To facilitate an exchange of information on civil registration among the countries of the Americas, the participants hoped that the United Nations Statistical Office, when it published the report of the Second Seminar, would distribute it as widely as possible among the Governments and the agencies and officials concerned in all the countries of the Americas. Similarly, it was considered important that those countries that had not replied to the ECLA questionnaire asking for a brief description of the civil registration service should do so as soon as possible, so that ECLA could publish the results of the survey in a complete form.

/Part III

Part III

CONCLUSIONS

60. The discussions at the Second Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration lead to the following conclusions:

- (a) The juridical function of civil registration is as important as ever. At the same time, the statistical function is also of great importance because of the data furnished for development planning and the study of social change. To facilitate the full performance of both these functions, civil registration should represent a felt need for the whole community, and should be an institution that forms part of the national process of development planning.
- (b) The resolutions of the First Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration are still fully applicable. Consequently it is desirable that countries should do all they can to carry them out.
- (c) The international agencies that have an interest in the efficient functioning of civil registration, including the United Nations Statistical Office, the Latin American Demographic Centre, the Pan American Health Organization, the Inter-American Statistical Institute and the Inter-American Children Institute, could co-ordinate their activities in order to make the best use of any resources that may be made available for this purpose. To this end it is suggested that a committee should be set up consisting of representatives of the agencies concerned, which will undertake to promote an integrated programme for improving the civil registration services in the Americas.
- (d) Countries that are without modern legislation on civil registration should review and amend their laws in the light of the indication and recommendations of the present Seminar.
- (e) Similarly, the civil registration services must revise and redefine their aims in accordance with the functions they should perform as part of the modern organization of government, and with the activities they carry out in co-operation with other institutions.
- (f) It is an urgent task to evaluate the degree of omission from the registers and carry out studies to determine the cause. Such studies should be made regularly and should take the form of a co-operative undertaking by the institutions that participate in the production of vital statistics.

/(g) It

- (g) It is advisable that countries should try out methods of organization and operation that could be used by the national committees on vital and health statistics that, it is suggested, might more appropriately be called national committees on civil registration and vital and health statistics, because of the part that they can play in promoting an improvement in civil registration.
- (h) A competent organization should prepare and publish a statistical manual for registrars, describing in simple terms the elementary technical principles involved.
- (i) Countries should work out a five-year programme to cover the period 1965-1969, for improving their civil registration services, in line with the suggestions and the outline put forward at the present Seminar. This programme should form part of the country's development plans. Although the chief responsibility for the formulation and development of such programmes falls to the Governments, their success cannot be assured without co-ordinated, full-scale and prompt assistance from international organizations.

Annex I

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Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.1 | Report on an experimental survey conducted to measure omissions in the records of births and deaths in the Republic of Panama (prepared by Hildebrando Araica A.) |
| ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.2 | Fundamental principles for the organization of a civil registration service (prepared by the Inter-American Civil Registration Association) |
| ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.3 | Some indications of the incompleteness of registration of infant births and deaths in the Republic of Argentina (prepared by the National Development Council of the Republic of Argentina) |
| ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.4 | Sample vital registration experiment (prepared by Joseph A. Cavanaugh) |
| ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.5 | Uses of vital records (prepared by Robert D. Grove) |
| ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.6 | Continuing control measures to ensure the completeness of registration (prepared by Charles R. Council) |
| ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.7 | Origin of and basis for the inter-institutional relations of public services (prepared by the ECLA secretariat) |
| ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.8 | Lineamientos generales sobre la organización del registro civil o del estado civil en Latinoamérica (prepared by José P. Achard and Ubaldino Calvento, Inter-American Children Institute) |
| | General outlines of the organization of a civil registration service in Latin America (summary only available in English) |

/ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.9

- ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.9 Description of some civil registration services in Latin America (prepared by the ECLA secretariat)
- ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.10 Methods of evaluating completeness of civil registration (prepared by the Statistical Office of the United Nations)
- ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.11 La administración como factor de progreso de los servicios de registro civil (prepared by the ECLA secretariat)
- ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.12 Analytical methods of evaluating completeness and quality of vital statistics (prepared by the Latin American Demographic Centre)
- ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.13 Un enfoque actual de los sistemas de registro y estadísticas vitales desde el punto de vista de la salud (prepared by the Pan American Health Organization)
- ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.14 Bases for a programme to improve civil registration service in Latin America between 1965 and 1969 (prepared by the ECLA secretariat)
- ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.15 Civil registration and social development (prepared by the ECLA secretariat)
- ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.16 Algunos intentos de evaluación del grado de integridad de las estadísticas vitales en países latinoamericanos (prepared by Leonel Alvarez L., Latin American Demographic Centre)
- ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.17 Programa de capacitación y entrenamiento para funcionarios de registro civil (prepared by the school of Public Health of the University of Chile)
- ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.18 Descripción del funcionamiento de la zona de mejoramiento de registro en Venezuela (prepared by Elena Alménar de Ochoa)
- ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.19 El departamento jurídico del servicio de registro civil de Chile (prepared by Rebeca Ramírez Parga, Office of Civil Registration and Identification, Chile)

ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.20

Application of the resolutions of the First Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration (prepared by the ECLA secretariat)

ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.21

International activities in promoting development of improvement in civil registration: 1954-1964 (prepared by the Statistical Office of the United Nations)

ST/ECLA/CONF.19/L.22

Socio-economic considerations about the office of vital statistics (civil registration office) (prepared by Dr. Manuel Fernando Martínez Paz, Inter-American Children Institute)

